TRACING THE DEVELOPMENT OF A THEORY OF LANGUAGE THROUGH HEIDEGGER'S WORKS

An Undergraduate Research Scholars Thesis

by

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ABSTRACT

Tracing the Development of a Theory of Language through Heidegger's Works. (May 2015)

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The early 20th century philosopher Martin Heidegger spends the later part of his career dealing in large part with questions concerning language, and the relationship between language and individuals. Heidegger addressed what he understood to be the dominant interpretation of the relationship between language and individuals, namely, that language is a tool used by humans as a mode of conveying information. Undoubtedly, this type of understanding is still the most common. Heidegger is interested in how we became creatures who understand language in this way. I will argue that, while he examines this, Heidegger develops his own theory of language. My task is to extract this theory of language, and discuss the intricacies of language, the individuals' relationship to language, and the ethical concerns in regards to this relationship. I hope to show that the question concerning human beings and language is one that spans the breadth of Heidegger's work, even though it is not expressly articulated in his earlier writings.

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

The Pre-Socratics set out to discover the fundamental nature of reality, and in doing so they began the tradition of western philosophy. Thales set the standard from which later Pre-Socratics would follow. Aristotle, in *The Metaphysics*, reports what has become Thales' largest contribution to western philosophy, namely, the assertion that water is the first principle.[1] It is from water, argues Thales, that all things arise. That is, in its fundamental nature, reality is water. Later Pre-Socratics took up the idea that there was a first principle, but disagreed about what that fist principle was. Anaximenes and Diogenes understood air to be the fundamental nature of reality, while Hippasus of Metapontum and Heraclitus of Ephesus posited fire to be the foundational substance.[2]

Thales is called the father of western philosophy because his search for an explanation and description of being, without resorting to mythology, has characterized a fundamental pursuit of western philosophy. It is in this pursuit that Plato develops his theory of Forms, and Aristotle develops his categories. This tradition was passed down through western intellectual history and, in the 20th century, is picked up by Martin Heidegger.

Born in Messkirch, Germany, on September 26, 1889, Heidegger grew up in a rural, religious community. He studied theology, then switched to philosophy in 1911, gained a position

[1] Aristotle, *The Metaphysics*, trans., Hugh Lawson-Trancred (New York : Penguin, 2004), 983b.
[2] Aristotle, The Metaphysics, 984a.

teaching at Freiburg in 1915, started a family, and published his magnum opus, *Being and Time (Sein und Zeit),* all before turning forty. In his early forties, Heidegger joined the Nazi party and became rector of the University of Freiberg. This part of Heidegger's life is shrouded in mystery (perhaps soon to be unveiled with the release of his personal journals). The facts we do know do not shed much light on the matter. Even after the war Heidegger did not leave the Nazi party, but parts of his life, such as his affair with Hannah Arendt, lead us to wonder about his anti-Semitism. Regardless of whether or not one can call Heidegger a nice guy, his genius and importance in the cannon of 20th century continental philosophy is undoubtable.

It is in *Being and Time* that Heidegger takes up the question of the fundamental nature of reality. He spends the first part of *Being and Time* discussing how best to approach the question of being. To approach this question without a point of reference, or a manifestation of being which he could use to guide his search, Heidegger understood that his project would never get off the ground. Like many philosophers before him, Heidegger places the human being in the center of his project, and with the human being as the foundation, delves into his search for the nature of being. The history of metaphysics is littered with questions that try to ascertain the being of certain beings. Does God exist? How do the mind and body exist in relation to one another? Does the table I experience in front of me exist? All of these questions posit knowledge of what it means to exist. Heidegger draws our attention to this oversight and points out that the fundamental question is: what does *exist* mean?

My analysis unfolds in three parts. First, I provide a brief reading of *Being and Time* in which I layout key aspects of Dasein. This examination of Dasein serves as the foundation for my

argument that Heidegger's later writings on language and dwelling come naturally out of *Being and Time*. The next chapter specifically addresses the transition to language and explains how *Being and Time* is part of a much larger project in which human beings' relationship with language is the central focus. In the final chapter, I back away a bit from Heidegger's text in order to provide an overview of his understating of the relationship between language and individuals. It is also in this chapter that I briefly discuss Adolf Eichmann as he is portrayed in Hannah Arendt's book *Eichmann in Jerusalem*[3], as an inauthentic individual because if his inability to listen to the speaking of language. This reading of Heidegger's texts in their entirety, along with the brief look at the example of Eichmann as someone who has utterly succumbed to understanding language as enframed, will reveal the ethical concerns in Heidegger's works.

[3] Hannah Arendt, *Eichmann in Jerusalem; a Report on the Banality of Evil*, (New York: Viking Press, 1963).

CHAPTER II

DASEIN AND *BEING AND TIME*

When Descartes used the human being to ground his epistemology, he used the human being in an importantly different way than Heidegger does in *Being and Time.* Descartes argues that the one thing we can know for certain is that *I* exist. Using his certainty of the existence of *I,* Descartes piles other knowledge on top of this foundation. Heidegger goes deeper than Descartes in trying to understand just what the *I* is. Whereas Descartes used the human being as the axiom from which he could derive certainty, Heidegger uses the human being as a lens through which he can glimpse being. Heidegger takes care to examine this lens, which he calls *Dasein.* The German verb *dasein* can be translated into 'exist', but it can also be translated into 'to be here/to be there'. Heidegger uses *Dasein,* a noun, to describe not only human beings, but the particular way in which human beings *be.*

But why does Heidegger begin with Dasein rather than existence of a substance, like the Pre-Socratics did, or take up Aristotle's idea of a prime mover? He does not work his way down to the human being the way Descartes did, through a sort of logical derivation, but rather, he chooses Dasein because it is Dasein that asks the question. Because it is Dasein that proposes the question of being, the being of all other beings is understood through Dasein, the questioner. "Thus *fundamental ontology,"* states Heidegger in the introduction to *Being and Time,* "from which alone all other ontologies can originate, must be sought in the *existential analysis of*

Dasein [original emphasis]".[4] Heidegger goes on to explain the specific ways in which Dasein takes priority over all other beings when examining the question of being.

The essence of a cow is to ruminate, and to use Sartre's example, the essence of a paper knife is to open envelopes. Dasein, on the other hand, does not come into existence with an essence. We are thrown into the world then have to decide, or create, our own essence. For cows and paper knives, being is not a problem, but Dasein finds itself in existence without an essence. Dasein is left to gather itself, examine its existence, and build itself into an essence of its own creating. It is for this reason that the question of being is a question for Dasein in a way that it is not a question for any other type of being.

> *The "essence" of Dasein lies in its existence.* The characteristics to be found in this being are thus not present "attributes" of an objectively present being which has such and such an "outward appearance," but rather possible ways for it to be, and only this. All being, one way or another, of this being is primarily being. Thus the term "Dasein," which we use to designate this being, does not express its what — as in the case of table, house, tree — but rather being [original emphasis].[5]

Dasein is the being of possibility. It decides its own mode, manner, and way of being. In *Being and Time*, Heidegger puts phenomenology to the task of examining what it means to exist as a human being. If we ask the question of being through the sciences, such as biology, chemistry, or

[4] Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time*, trans., Joan Stanbaugh, revised by Dennis J. Schmidt (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2010), 12.
[5] Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time*, 41.

physics, we will undoubtedly get an account of what it is to be, but this account will explain the existence of human beings in a way that does not get at exactly how human beings exist differently than other beings. The sciences approach Dasein as an item that exists in no different way than other beings. They can tell us what we are anatomically, biologically, and psychologically, but they cannot get at how human beings are insofar as we exist in a different way than other beings. Chemistry, for example, can give an account of the chemical makeup of a giraffe just as easily as it could provide the chemical makeup of a human. Another short coming of the sciences, Heidegger points out, is that they all rely on some underlying set of principle that are not in themselves investigated. Biology does not ask questions about the scientific method. These unquestionable platforms from which the sciences formulate their theories provide only a shaky foundation.

The humanities, or social science, gain a little more ground than the hard sciences in their approach to Dasein, but we have forgotten too much about human existence to access Dasein in the humanities' texts. Also, the question has so long been forgotten that the authors of the texts read and studied in the humanities were already so displaced from human existence that they could not have placed what it means to be a human being in their writings. As Heidegger puts it: "*All ontology, no matter how rich and tightly knit a system of categories it has at its disposal, remains fundamentally blind and perverts its innermost intent if it has not previously clarified the meaning of being sufficiently and grasped this clarification as its fundamental task* [original emphasis]."[6]

[6] Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time*, 10.

Phenomenology, a careful description of our own existence, is the only way to get at the question of being, and formulate the question of what it is to exist as a human being. It is this in-looking, argues Heidegger, which allows us access to Dasein. Unlike the sciences, phenomenology does not have its legitimacy in a foundational principle. It is self-authenticating; there is no check for what we find when we investigate with phenomenology. We find what we find. With phenomenology we are not looking outside to things like science or religion for an answer to what it means to be human beings, we look into ourselves and past the facades that we all hold up to describe our being (our career, political orientation, gender, ect…), and get at the bone of our being.

Being and Time makes a suggestion rather than a logical argument. When Heidegger conducts his phenomenological investigation, he arrives at something that he argues is shared with all human beings. While every Dasein is an individual, we all share a certain type of care for being. This care is wholly our own, but each of us do care. In *Being and Time,* Heidegger tells us, that when he looks inside of himself, he finds a sea of things. But he argues that we are able to boil this sea of business and worry down to a base worry, the concern from which all of our other concerns arise. This base worry is the care [*sorge*] for our existence, the constant concern of "who am I to be?". Care, in the sense that it is used by Heidegger, should be thought of as the type of care parents have for their children. They care for their children insofar as they are concerned with the health and wellbeing of their children, but parents also care for their children in that they love their children. There is a sense of taking-care-of, and a caring-about. *Sorge,* the German word that Heidegger uses, carries with it this two part meaning of care. *Being and Time* calls us to phenomenologically investigate ourselves and see if we arrive at the same things as

Heidegger, a sea of worries founded on an underlying care for our being. Heidegger thinks if our in-looking arrives at a similar conclusion as his, then *Being and Time* will be useful to us. This is the suggestion that *Being and Time* makes: look into yourself and discover what it is to *be* insofar as you are a human being.

Human beings are the kinds of beings for whom their being is a concern. This is what distinguishes human beings from all other beings, and it is what we find through phenomenology. When bees pollinate, or build a honey comb, they are certainly busy. But the business of the bees is not sprung from a worry of how to be. The bees are not the kinds of beings for whom being is a concern. Human beings, on the other hand, cannot get through the day without this question rearing. 'Are', 'is', 'was', 'am', 'were', and 'will' are all forms of the verb 'to be'. Every time we talk, we speak about being. The epitome of small talk, a discussion of the weather, expounds an account of ones experience of how the world *is* on that particular day. "It is a nice fall day".

Human beings, insofar as we look at ourselves as existing as creatures whom are haunted by the question of being, are Dasein. To get at Dasein, we have to look into ourselves deep enough to arrive at human beings as lucid beings. We have to get past the essences and get to ourselves at the base, at our existence as it is in preceding any essence. Getting past the understanding of ourselves as biological beings, or as children of God, is the only way to get at ourselves enough so that we can make an authentic decision about how to lead our lives, about how to exist. How to *be* is a live issue for human beings. We can unburden ourselves of this, a choice to avoid choosing how to lead one's life is still a choice about leading one's life.

In the Throws

When Heidegger begins to unveil Dasein, he comes to understand human beings as being in a paradoxical state. We are the beings for whom being is a concern, and, at the same time, we are beings that flee from the responsibility of dealing with this concern. What he means by this is that human beings are always in the middle of doing something, undertaking a task that is not yet finished, and in being busy, we ignore the question of being, we are simply doing. Living out our routines does not require us to directly address the question of being, nor decide the kind of being one wants to be. Because of this, we find that we are usually away from ourselves. With our mind dispersed in thinking about all the things we have to get done now, and what we have to do later, we are not wholly conscious of ourselves as individual beings, as Dasein. To answer the question of being, one needs to be brought back into one's self, to be free of the routine and become wholly one's self.

Thrownness [*Geworfenheit*] is the word used to describe this paradoxical state. We are thrown into the world and into every situation we find ourselves in. When one comes back to one's self from dispersement, they discover that they are in the middle of a task, in the middle of taking notes, of driving, of walking. One finds that they have been thrown into these situations, and from these situations we throw ourselves into the next task. Constantly, we are in the throws. The very question that defines us as human beings, the question of being, is the question we are always too busy to ask. If we are not a whole, we cannot answer questions about the kind of being we want to be.

This thrownness (or facticity) is not used merely to describe the fact of our historical existence. For example, when Heidegger argues that one is thrown into the world, he does not mean only that we are born at a certain time in history. Thrownness permeates our entire existence. We are always already thrown. That is, I was not merely thrown into the 90s when I was born, but was also thrown into the situation of listening to the radio, or writing this paper, or reviewing notes for a class. Heidegger's concept of thrownness must be understood as a constantly reoccurring event along with it being historical.

This situation (that of being thrown beings) does not directly appear to us. Part of Heidegger's brilliance is his ability to find this phenomenon within the human condition. He explains that thrownness does not manifest itself wholly as itself. That is, we experience thrownness through a medium, namely our moods.

Moods

Heidegger explains that this thrownness is oriented by our moods. It is never the case that we find ourselves not in a mood [*Stimmung*]. This part of Heidegger's philosophy should not be over complicated. He is using 'mood' rather colloquially. As in, "I am in a happy mood", or "I am feeling board". But what is important to note is that when we say we *find* ourselves in a mood, we mean it quite literally. No one decides to be in this or that mood (I cannot say to myself "be happy now, and become happy as a result), we *discover* that we are in a mood. One can work on one's self to bring about a mood, or change their mood, but they do that from already within the

mood that they find themselves in. "The fact that moods can be spoiled and change only means that Dasein is always already in a mood."[7]

When we discover that we have been thrown, we find that we are in a mood. As briefly discussed in the previous section, moods are how we come to understand ourselves as thrown beings. Moods disclose the situation we find ourselves in, and allow us to understand what our situation means to us.

Revealing to us that we are thrown beings is not the only task of moods. They take things one more step. It is only when our mood discloses our situation within the world that we are able to throw (or project) ourselves into the next situation. We are what one could call, *in the throws*. Moods first disclose the situation we are currently in (the situation we have found ourselves thrown into), and then provide the platform from which we decide what to do. Being in this or that mood pushes us towards our next action. It is only from this disclosideness that we are able to throw ourselves forward. "Mood makes manifest 'how one is and is coming along'. In this 'how one is' being in a mood brings being into its 'there.'"[8]

Some moods incline us to gather ourselves into a whole, whereas other moods incline us to disperse. By "being a whole" Heidegger means that we are conscious of our being without distractions. That is, when we are *whole,* we are not worried about what we are going to eat for lunch, when our next meeting is, or anything outside of our own being. When he speaks of

[7] Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time*, 131.
[8] Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time*, 131.

discernment, he is talking about our state during the times we are concerned about laundry and grades (or anything of this sort). We are dispersed when our concern is not completely focused on our condition as a human being.

Anger, and jealously, force us to abandon ourselves. We are angry about this or that, and we are jealous because of so and so. The objects that derive these feelings come from outside of our selves. If we are angry with someone or about something, our thoughts are not upon our self, we are thinking about someone else, or something else. These moods force us to abandon ourselves. However, when we are bored, sad, or thinking about our own death, our thoughts are directed towards ourselves. We are brought back upon ourselves because we are not bored about someone or something else; our sadness is not directed at anything (at least not in the sense that sad is being used here), and when we are thinking about our death we are plunged into our own being. These moods fold us upon ourselves and allow us to return from disbursement.

Death

Angst, for Heidegger, is the mood or feeling that best allows us to gather ourselves. This angst is the result of being haunted by death. All of us are marked by death; we are going to die. However, Heidegger does not talk about death in general; he draws a distinction between biological death and mortality. Biological death is the physical demise of the body, the last breath or the last beat of the heart. We do not experience our biological death; we cannot experience anything when our heart stops beating and we are no longer breathing. Because Heidegger is conducting a phenomenological investigation, it is no surprise that events that one cannot experience are of little importance to him. Mortality is the haunting of death. Unlike biological death, we can experience mortality and constantly do experience it. Human beings are

haunted by their individual mortality. Haunting is not a pursuit; it does not come from something external, but is rather always within. There is no corporeal object outside of us that is the threat. Furthermore, this threat is not actual, but rather potential. Our mortality looms over us, reminding us of the imminent death we are constantly approaching. It is the recognition of this haunting that delivers us to the mood of angst and pulls us into ourselves out of disbursement.

Heidegger reveals three constituent existential structures of death. The first of these explains that death is the most defining feature of the individual. By defining, he means that without death, one would not be Dasein. It is the one thing that is, in principle, unchangeable. The second structure of death is that it is incalculable. One can never know when they are going to die. Finally, death is uncircumventable. Death is the unavoidable possibility of Dasein. In *Being and Nothingness*, Sartre objects to the idea that death is an ever looming possibility. He argues that rather than death being a possibility, it is the end of all possibilities. "Thus death is not my possibility of no longer realizing a presence in the world but rather an always possible nihilation of my possibilities which is outside of my possibilities."[9] In answering Sartre's objection, it is helpful to recall that when Heidegger explains death as an unavoidable possibility, he is not talking about the physical demise of the body, but rather the haunting of death. It is mortality that is the constant possibility, not death insofar as it is the physical demise of the body. If we were to understand death purely as the latter, Sartre's objection would be difficult to rebut, but it would be a stretch to argue that death, insofar as we understand it as mortality, is the end of all possibilities.

[9] Jean-Paul Sartre, *Being and Nothingness*, trans., Hazel E. Barnes (New York: Philosophical Library, 1956), 537.

Individuals can try to avoid thinking about the fact that we are going to die, but the haunting will overtake us no matter how adamant we are about denying it. Frequently we act in ways which ignore these constituent existential structures of death. Plans are made for years down the road, thirty year mortgages are taken out, and we make choices in our life to secure the future we desire. All of these acts ignore the facts that death is what makes us human beings, that it can happen at any time, and that there is not a thing we can do to stop it.

No matter how hard one tries to disregard death, explains Heidegger, the haunting will, from time to time, overtake us. The feeling that the haunting of death brings about in us is *angst.* Modern society pushes and encourages us to avoid and distract ourselves from angst. The structures of modern society are organized in such a way as to constantly bombard us with avenues through which we can take flight from the angst brought about by the haunting of death.

Being-with

Above (under *Dasein and Being and Time)*, Heidegger's rejection of Descartes was discussed. When Heidegger explains what is meant by 'being-with', he finds it useful to bring about Descartes' understanding of what it is to be a human being in order to negatively define Dasein. Human beings, argues Heidegger, never exist as purely thinking beings isolated from the world. In rejecting this Cartesian thinking of Dasein as a substance (a substance that thinks and there for *is)*, Heidegger coins the compound expression "being-in-the-world" in order to express a unification of the types of being that is Dasein. "...being-in-the-world is an *a priori* necessary

constitution of Desein..."[10] Human beings dwell in the world before they can in any way participate in their own being. One has to dwell within the world if one is to find themselves in a mood, be haunted by death, or think. But Heidegger wants to make it clear that he does not mean, by Dasein being-in-the-world, that Dasein is present-at-hand. That is, he does not understand Dasein as an object, or a substance, in its singularity within the world, but rather, Dasein is always experienced as being-with.

In addition to being-in-the-world, human beings are always *with* others. We are not the kind of beings that can ever be alone. "Insofar as Dasein *is* at all, it has the kind of being of being-with-one-another."[11] At first glance, it would appear that this is a ridiculous assertion. Often, one could say, individuals are alone. Looking at Dasein through an ontological register, however, as Heidegger does, Dasein is always with others.

We are born as no one in particular; this fact is an *a priori* condition of Daseins' being-in-the-world. This also relates to Heidegger's idea of thrownness. By being born, we are thrown into disbursement (as no one in particular), and we have to grow in order to develop into a being with the potential for authenticity, into Dasein. In its everydayness, Dasein does what one does because it is what one does. "The self of everyday Dasein is the *they-self,* which we distinguish from the *authentic self*, that is, the self which has explicitly grasped itself. As the they-self, Dasein is *dispersed* in the they and must first find itself."[12]

[10] Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time*, 54.
[11] Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time*, 122.
[12] Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time*, 125.

In being a they, Dasein is disburdened from answering the *who.* Heidegger interchangeably uses "they" and "others", but it is important to understand that the self is not excluded when these words are invoked. We are a part of our culture, and the way in which we carry out our everyday actions (the speed we walk, the distance we stand from one another when we converse, the way we eat, when it is appropriate to say "thank you") is largely not oriented by answering the question "who am I?", but rather we do what we do because it is what one does. It is because of this that H.L. Dreyfus translates *das Man* as "the one".[13]

Language

While Heidegger devotes several texts later in his career to the topic of language, there are only a few pages in *Being and Time* that deal with the subject. Heidegger specifically makes note of *Being and Time* section 34 (the very short section that explicitly discuses language) in his dialogue titled "A Dialogue on Language"[14]. In the dialogue, Heidegger talks about a philosophy course he taught before the publication of *Being and Time*, titled "Expression and Appearance", which was devoted to the discussion of language. Heidegger explains that:

> The entire course remained a suggestion. I never did more than follow a faint trail, but follow it I did. The trail was an almost imperceptible announcing that we would be set free into the open, now dark and perplexing, now again lightning-sharp like a sudden insight, which then, in turn, eluded every effort to say it.[15]

[13] Hubert L. Dreyfus, *Being-in-the-World: A Commentary on Heidegger's Being and Time, Division I* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1990).
[14] Martin Heidegger, "A Dialogue on Language," In *On the Way to Language*, trans., Peter Hertz (New York: Harper & Row, 1971), 1-54.
[15] Martin Heidegger, "A Dialogue on Language," 41.

This quote gives us some insight to Heidegger's early interests and struggles with language as a philosophical undertaking. In section 34 of *Being and Time*, Heidegger explains that discourse (which he describes as "existential language"[16]) is necessary if Dasein is to exist at all. In this short section, Heidegger eludes to a few themes that are further developed in his later works. For example, he explains that the way we are in-the-world is indicated by the way we speak, and that "the communication of the existential possibilities of attunement, that is, the disclosing of existence, can become the true aim of 'poetic' speech."[17] What Heidegger makes clear in this section is that there is, at least to some extent, an interdependent relationship between language and Dasein.

Concluding remarks on chapter II

With the possible exception of the last few sections of *Being and Time* (in which other thinker's understanding of time is the central focus), the text works at developing a notion of, and explaining, Dasein. The sub chapters above each briefly describe some of Dasein's central traits. All of the Dasein's traits revolve around what Heidegger makes clear is the aspect of Dasein that makes Dasein the particular kind of being that it is, namely, that Dasein *Cares.*

We are thrown into the world through no action, or choice, of our own. In the same way that we find ourselves thrown into the world, we find that we are always already in a mood. Our mood, however, provides us with important orientation in the world. Anxiety about death is the mood

[16] Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time*, 156.
[17] Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time*, 157.

which provides the opportunity for Dasein to come back upon itself in a way that allows for a resoluteness of the self when amongst the *they*. The distinction between authentic Dasein and inauthentic Dasein is disclosed along this line. Authentic Dasein cares about its being in such a way that it is resolved in its decisions, and being, not because it is doing what one does, but because it has gathered itself and chosen strictly for itself with an understanding of mortality and its own personal history.

The inauthentic Dasein flees from this burden of choosing for itself and understanding that "I will die". Inauthentic Dasein knows that one dies, but evades making this fate its ownmost possibility. Language (or discourse) plays a vital role in authentic Dasein's being-in-the-world, but the details of the relationship between language and Dasein is not explained in detail in *Being and Time.* The forth coming chapter is devoted to examining a few of Heidegger's later text in an effort to find the role of language in authentic being.

CHAPTER III

THE LATER WORKS

While it is my argument that the later writings carry on a large part of the project that Heidegger begins with *Being and Time,* we are only able to use the name "later works" because there is a significant change in Heidegger's philosophical questions and writing style. He himself called this point in his career the '*kehre*', or turning. Around the mid1930s (scholars disagree on when exactly the line should be drawn) we divide Heidegger's works into earlier and later. *Being and Time* constitutes the majority of his earlier work, along with many lectures. The later work themselves do not constitute an ideologically solidified set of works; in fact it could be argued that there are several turns in Heidegger's work. The shift during the thirties, however, is such a change, in even the feel of Heidegger's writing, that the tradition of drawing a line of some sort is appropriate.

My suggestion is not that this line ought to be erased, but that understanding the line as a staunch division is a misunderstanding. Dasein continues to be at the heart of Heidegger's work even after the *kehre.* The change is a result of Heidegger refining the project of *Being and Time.* He has told us that to be human is to care, but in the later writings he adds that to be human is to care poetically. This refined idea about exactly how human beings dwell within the world forces Heidegger's writing to move from being extremely rigid, and exhaustively detailed, to almost fluid and shapeless. The influences of important philosophers, such as Kant and Husserl, are easy to find in Heidegger's early work, but as he progresses through his career, Heidegger's work resembles traditional philosophy less and less.

This chapter will focus on a few key texts from the later works that demonstrate a refocusing of what it means to be a human being. Many of the themes from *Being and Time,* such as alienation and authenticity, will resurface as we follow Heidegger's thinking to the notion that the way human beings understand and interact with language defines their authenticity. "The Question Concerning Technology" is a powerful and persuasive essay. It also a vital text in understanding how Heidegger ends up placing so much emphasis on language when it comes to human beings dwelling within the world. It is with this essay that Heidegger begins to explain how it is that human beings became beings who understand language as a tool.

Heidegger, in *The Question Concerning Technology,* draws our attention to the fact that we have not looked closely enough at the things that constitute and guide our existence. Why are there four causes? Why is it the case that the four causes are these four and not some other four? Heidegger begins this essay by asking these questions, and traces the etymology of 'cause' in order to give us a sense of what we understand a cause to be. What is revealed to us is that "The four causes are the ways, all belonging at once to each other, of being responsible for something else."[18] While each of the causes are different, their relationship is responsible for bringing something into the open. Heidegger uses the example of a silver chalice. By working together, the causes bring about the chalice, and present the chalice to us as being ready to use. Collectively, the four causes bring things into being; the chalice is brought forth from out of concealment into unconcealment. Here, Heidegger is beginning to tie technology to *truth*, which

[18] Martin Heidegger, "The Question Concerning Technology," In *Basic Writings: From Being and Time (1927) to The Task of Thinking (1964)*, edited by David Krell (New York: Harper & Row, 1977), 290.

he defines as unconcealment. With technology we are able to bring more and more things out of concealment and into being.

Heidegger divides the history of being into separate epochs. In each epoch, being is understood in an importantly different way than in the other epochs, and this difference in the understanding of Being reveals itself in everyday facets of lives of the people that live during those epochs. In tracing these epochs, Heidegger is tracing the change in the meaning of *isness* over time. Examining the epochs allows for an understanding of Heidegger's diagnosis of our current epoch.

He begins in Greece during the time of Homer. For the people of this place and time, to *be* was to come into being, and then fade out of it. We can look back to the discussion of moods for an example of this. Moods come about, linger for a while, and then fade away. Athletic performances, banquets, the seasons, and several other important events in the Homeric Greeks' lives, all revealed themselves as coming into being, and then fading out of it.

Later, the Greeks begin to understand being in such a way as to warrant Heidegger positing a new epoch. The Greeks move from understanding being as things coming into it, then sliding out, to an understanding of being as *poiesis.* In this epoch, rather than things coming in and going out of being, things have to be brought into being. Craftsmen, cooks, and great readers do this quite well. Excellent cooks are able to bring things out of the food that would otherwise remain hidden. Craftsmen have the skill to bring art out of stone, and great readers are able to find meaning in texts that would otherwise be hidden. *Poiesis* is the nurturing which allows things to

come into being and show themselves. For example, Michelangelo brought David from out of the marble he would otherwise have been hidden in.

Moving then to the Romans, we find a turn from this idea of nurturing and bringing things into being, to an idea of being that revolves around powerful imposition. Being is not brought out in things; rather, being is imposed onto things. We can look to the Roman cities and roads for example. Order was imposed onto the society, forcing the structures and organization to exist in a way they saw fit.

Christianity follows the Roman idea of imposing being and goes a step further. No longer is it the human being that imposes being onto objects, but God himself. God imposes order onto everything because he is the creator of everything. The idea of the divine right of kings comes from the Christian understanding of being. God has placed everything in the proper order. Kings do what kings do, and are kings, because God has ordered it that way. From kings we can work our way down through the different lords, to the peasants, to animals, plants, and even minerals and elements.

From Christianity, we moved to the modern age, and with this, being came to be understood as the breaking down of barriers that the world presented. Things came into being when that which opposed human will was dominated. This was the age of exploration and scientific advances. Oceans were sailed and truths revealed by science.

Finally, Heidegger argues, we have arrived at an age where being is understood technologically. In our current age, everything is interconnected and all meaningful distinction has been shunned, except for the pseudo distinction of efficiency. Maximum efficiency has become the standard upon which all being is measured. All aspects of our lives, from the houses we live in to the things available on the market, have become standardized in order to allow for efficient living. While Heidegger argues that there are great benefits to technology, it saves us from having to do many tedious tasks, there is a danger to the efficiency provided by technology.

The ability to get through life without having to develop much skill is provided by technology, but is very seductive and is one of the dangers Heidegger sees hiding within a technological understanding of the world. Technology allows one to make food without being a chef, and to hear music without having to play an instrument. So while this new epoch discloses being in an important and different way than the previous epochs, it is dangerous because it allows for one to not develop skills, and without the mastery of thing like tools, food, and instruments, being will remain hidden in ways that it otherwise would not have been.[19]

Without the skill to use a hammer, the hammer will never reveal itself to you as it actually is. You will be able to see the color and structure of the hammer, but in order for the tool to reveal itself as itself, one must have the skill to use the hammer in order to provide the space required for its coming into being. Skill, however, has been overshadowed by the efficiency of technology, and the word has been organized as a system in which things are just cogs in the

[19] Heidegger's understanding of epochs is explained in *Being in the World*, Directed by Tao Ruspoli, 2010, Film.

wheel house. All cogs are replaceable, if another cog comes along that is able to do the job more efficiently.

It is in this age that we have developed an understanding of the world as containing objects from which we can create useful things; in this epoch we begin to enframe [*Ge-stell*] the world. It is by seeing the world as useful things, or potentially useful thing (or means to ends) that makes technology. Modern technology (which we can understand to be technology beginning in the industrial age and continuing ever since) reveals things in a particular way, namely as 'standing-reserve' [*Bestand*]. This way of understanding technology stands in contrast with the way human beings have understood the world in the past. For the Greeks, things *are* according to their own nature, and in the Middle Ages, things *are* the way they were divinely created to be. Standing-reserve, however, treats things as things waiting to be used by human beings. Heidegger explains this by describing the modern understanding of coal: "it is on call, ready to deliver the sun's warmth that is stored in it."[20] In his book, *Heidegger's Later Writings,* Lee Braver describes what Heidegger means by 'standing-reserve':

> All machines share the function of standing ready, waiting to fulfill our desires. The dishwasher crouches in the corner, waiting to spring into action the moment I want my dishes cleaned. And the water and electricity it requires must constantly stand at the edge of the faucet and socket, leaning forward in anticipation of service... the more I have to adapt my behavior to machines instead of the reverse... the worse the technology.[21]

[20] Martin Heidegger, "The Question Concerning Technology," 297.
[21] Lee Braver, "The Question Concerning Technology," In *Heidegger's Later Writings a Reader's Guide* (London: Continuum, 2009), 85.

Before modern technology, the wind had to be blowing if one was to use the winds energy, and the speed at which a water mill could grind grain depended on how fast the river was running. The great innovation of modern technology is the ability to store electricity, an energy that can be used in countless useful ways. Our desires use to be at the mercy of nature, but now we have conquered nature in such a way that its fruits are at our disposal.

Acquiring the ability to place nature on reserve has formed our modern understanding of the world. No longer do we see the Rhine River as a majestic part of nature. We see it as a source of hydroelectric power waiting for someone to harvest and store its energy. In understanding the world in such a way, we have learned to imagine ourselves as *a part from* nature, as opposed *to a part of* it. In removing ourselves in such a way, we no longer feel at home in the world. 'World' has become a department store shelf that I can pick from whenever I need to, and remove myself from whenever I wish.

Heidegger explains that this technological understanding, or technological enframement, has infected civilization. If I am to make more machines and live more efficiently, I have to continue and expand my view of the world as a bundle of resources, waiting for me to call upon them and use them. "Whatever stands by in the sense of standing-reserve no longer stands over and against us."[22] A technological understanding of the world reaches beyond how one sees nature. That is, we have begun to place more things on the shelf than just natural resources. This is evident from the phrase 'human resource'. If we are to maximize the utility of the world, we must also place

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[22] Martin Heidegger, "The Question Concerning Technology," 298.

ourselves and others on reserve. Heidegger explains: "The forester who measures the felled timber in the woods and who to all appearances walks the forest path in the same way his grandfather did is today ordered by the industry that produces commercial woods, whether he knows it or not."[23] So not only do we understand nature to be standing-reserve, but also human beings.

Society is structured in such a way as to turn individuals into replaceable apparatuses. No longer does one have to know the ins and outs of woodworking to build a table, or even a house for that matter, but only has have knowledge of a very small part of the process. The idea that this economic model is efficient because the vast majority of the population can fill any factory position because there is such little knowledge and training required to fill one spot on the assembly line. This economic model is of course extremely efficient, but the efficiency is the result of understanding people as an exchangeable means of production.

The real danger in a technological enframement of the world is when individuals surrender all the other ways of revealing the world, except for the technological. "It is precisely in enframing," explains Heidegger, "which threatens to sweep man away into ordering as the supposed way of revealing, and so thrusts man into the danger of the surrender of his free essence."[24] Heidegger does not recommend that we abandon the essence of technology, but that we understand it as only one way of revealing. One ought to pay heed to the essence of technology, but to eliminate it would be to eliminate a way of revealing.

[23] Martin Heidegger, "The Question Concerning Technology," 299.
[24] Martin Heidegger, "The Question Concerning Technology," 313-314.

In the final pages of *The Question Concerning Technology*, Heidegger discusses a bit of the history of the word 'technology'. "There was a time when it was not technology alone that bore the name *technē.* Once that revealing that brings forth truth into the splendor of radiant appearance was also called *technē.*"[25] Art use to be considered *technē.* This was because art brings things into revealing. The highest form of *technē*, the form of art that best brings things into the open and makes them present, is poetry. It is these final pages that push us closer to an understanding of Heidegger's path towards language that he has been clearing since *Being and Time.*

A concern for the forgetfulness of Being is as central in this essay as it is in *Being and Time.* Heidegger spends time in *The Question Concerning Technology* warning us of the danger of a technological essence because of the way it reveals the beings of the world as enframed. This, however, is not the greatest danger. The greatest danger is *only* admitting to a technologically enframed world. Eliminating this enframement, a task that Heidegger does not think is even possible, is harmful because in eliminating a technological enframement, we lose beings in so far as they are reveled through the essence of technology.

In *Being and Time* Heidegger meticulously examines Dasein. We are walked through several of the aspects of Dasein that make Dasein the particular kind of being that it is. It is explained in detail what it means for Dasein to be a being that *cares. The Question Concerning Technology* pushes this task forward by discussing how it is that the world and the other is revealed to Dasein. This essay delves deeper into examining how it is that Dasein is with-in-the-world.

[25] Martin Heidegger, "The Question Concerning Technology," 315.

The essay ends with a description of a line taken from one of Holderline's late poems. "...poetically man dwells..." describes what Heidegger has come to understand as the way Dasein is in-the-world. After thoughtfully placing these words back into the poem from which they came, we get a more robust understanding of what the poet is bringing into the open.

Full of merit, yet poetically, man
Dwells on this earth.

We can feel Heidegger's understanding of Dasein being pulled towards the poetic by this sentence. Heidegger, in fact, takes Holderline's words for the title of his essay *"... Poetically Man Dwells..."*

In *"... Poetically Man Dwells..."* Heidegger arrives at what Dasein, being a poetic being, means. He does this by opening up the words of Holderline's poem in a way that allows the poet himself to discuss poetic dwelling. Heidegger lets the poem speak. "Poetry", explains Heidegger, "does not fly above and surmount the earth in order to escape it and hang over it. Poetry is what first brings man onto the earth, making him belong to it, and thus brings him into dwelling."[26] *Being and Time* explains that one is always already in-the-world, but it is the later essays, such as the one we are discussing here, that delve more deeply into how Dasein actually *is* in-the-world. Poetically, argues Heidegger, is the way in which human beings inhabit the world. Poetry opens the space between earth and the heavens. It is this space in which Dasein dwells.

[26] Martin Heidegger, ""...Poetically Man Dwells..."," In *Poetry, Language, Thought*, trans., Albert Hofstadter (New York: Harper & Row, 1971), 218.

Before we move any further with what Heidegger understands to be the role of poetry for human beings, we must examine a few of the concepts Heidegger employees. Specifically we will have to explain the title of the essay *"...Poetically Man Dwells..."*. Poetry is part of language. Heidegger draws a distinction between language and poetry only to emphasize that poetry is the highest form of language. Language is a nexus of possibility and disclosure. And it is in enacting language through naming, that we, as human beings, bring being into view. In the way that the sculptor is able to see the statue within the marble, and then bring it out of the marble, human beings bring things out of language through naming. The best sculptors of language are of course the poets. In the same way that the best sculptor is able to most fully bring to light what is within the marble, the best poet is able to bring into being that which the poem is about. Marble, for the sculpture, is a nexus of possible sculptures, a good sculptor is able to give voice to the marble and provide the space for it to come into its ownmost being. This is what the poet does in naming. She provides a space for the thing she names in the naming.

Heidegger is quick to address the obvious rebuttal that, while poets may in fact dwell poetically, how is it that *all* human beings dwell poetically? In what sense are our days, which are filled with work and struggle for success, poetic at all? Part of this objection comes about from improperly limiting the poet's words. If we attend the phrase in question closely, we see that there is no specific date which Holderline is asserting man dwells in poetically. That is, we should not understand the poet to be arguing that today, as opposed to some other day, is the time in which poetic dwelling takes place.

This examination of 'poetic' does not get us much closer to clarity however. In fact it may even further muddy the waters. And the elimination of the idea that this dwelling poetically is tied to any specific time in history, or time of day, does not deliver an answer to either of the questions above.

In order to open the poetic phrase, Heidegger evokes the etymology of the Greek word *poiesis.* "Making, in Greek, is *poiesis*"[27]. In dwelling, then, human beings are creating. Moreover, as we have already learned, this creating does not occur within the imagination of the poet. This creating takes place between the heavens and earth. For Holderline and Heidegger, it is this creating, or making, which allows us to dwell; "poetry first causes dwelling to be a dwelling."[28] This phrase is what Heidegger asserts as the meaning of "poetically man dwells".

But what is it that Holderline speaks of when he speaks of dwelling? Now with an understanding of the poetic to be a sort of making, we begin to see the poets phrase as meaning something closer to "in creating, man dwells upon this earth". In explaining Dasein's dwelling, in which the creation is undertaken, Heidegger tells us that "When Hölderlin speaks of dwelling, he has before his eyes the basic character of human existence."[29] This idea of dwelling has shown itself throughout *Being and Time* and *The Question Concerning Technology.* In *Being and Time* it is tied to the idea of being-in. "'In' stems from *innan-*, to live, *habitate,* to dwell [original emphasis]."[30] Heidegger continues by explaining that the phrase "I am", by its very nature, means "I dwell". Being is the infinitive of "I am" and, understood existentially, 'being' means

[27] Martin Heidegger, ""...Poetically Man Dwells..."," 214.
[28] Martin Heidegger, ""...Poetically Man Dwells..."," 215.
[29] Martin Heidegger, ""...Poetically Man Dwells..."," 215.
[30] Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time,* 54.

dwelling near. "*Being-in is thus the formal existential expression of the being of Dasein which has the essential constitution of being-in-the-world* [original emphasis]."[31]

We can see from this quote, when we compare it to the quote from *"...Poetically Man Dwells..."* which lays forth the idea that *dwelling* is the basic character of human existence, that Heidegger's understanding of Dasein as being-in-the-world is an ever occurring theme throughout *Being and Time* and his later works. "Das Wohnen aber ist *der Grundzung* des Sein, demgemäß die Sterblichen sind [original emphasis]."[32] This quote from *Vorträge und Aufsätze* (*Lectures and Essays*) tells us exactly what we want to hear form Heidegger. "Dwelling, however, is the *fundamental characteristic* of Being, in keeping with which mortals exist."[33] Dasein, the being which is towards death, the mortal being, has at its root this concept of dwelling. This sentiment is expressed continuously throughout Heidegger's writings. Through the decades in which Heidegger worked, the idea became more and more refined, and the project itself never swayed far from its path. We see, in *Being and Time,* the phenomenological description of Dasein as being-in. It is also in this book that Heidegger links 'being-in' to 'dwelling'. This idea of Dasein and dwelling is further explored in the later works. In this further exploration, the understanding of dwelling is not to be understood as being anything excessively different than the dwelling posited as Dasein's being-in. Rather, it is best understood as the continuation of the phenomenological description of Dasein as being-in, or as *dwelling.*

[31] Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time*, 55.
[32] Martin Heidegger, "Bauen Wohnen Denken." In *Vorträge Und Aufsätze* (Frankfurt Am Main: Vittorio Klostermann, 2000), 163.
[33] My translation

While it is clear that the idea of dwelling has developed throughout Heidegger's work. Dwelling boils down into a codependent relationship with poetic creation. To be human is to be-with and to be-in-the-world. It is poetry which allows us to undertake this dwelling in-the-world. Dwelling opens the space and poetry makes the space home. "Poetry is what lets us dwell."[34] It is poetry which lets human beings undertake the task of dwelling, which is the fundamental characteristic of Dasein. In other words, it is poetry that allows us to be-in-the-world in a particularly human way.

[34] Martin Heidegger, ""...Poetically Man Dwells..."," 215.

CHAPTER IV

CONCLUDING REMARKS

Authenticity and language

What we might call the dominant approach to understanding the relationship between language and the individual is what Heidegger spends the latter part of his career theorizing against. The dominant approach understands language as a tool that human beings have developed. This approach removes the individual from language, placing language in reserve. Through understanding language as a tool, the dominant school of thought sees it as the mechanism we, as individuals, use to express wants and desires, and as the medium through which we describe the world. Heidegger flips this relationship, placing language above individuals. He argues that language is the master of individuals, and that when we look to the essence of language, we find that it is neither "expression nor an activity of man."[35] He explains that viewing language as a tool is insufficient if we are to seek the nature of language. The guiding proposition in Heidegger's understanding of the relationship between language and the individual is 'Language speaks'. It is only in so far as the individual is able to access the speaking of language that she is able to speak herself. Human beings answer to the call of language, according to Heidegger. It does seem however, that language is somewhat indebted to mortals even in Heidegger's understanding of the relationship. "Mortal speech is a calling that names"[36], and it is through this naming that mortals bring things in to the world. Without the mortal, language would not be able to name.

[35] Martin Heidegger, "Language" In *Poetry, language, Thought*, trans., Albert Hofstadter (New York: Harper & Row, 1971), 197.
[36] Martin Heidegger, "Language," In *Poetry, language, Thought*, trans., Albert Hofstadter (New York: Harper & Row, 1971), 208.

The importance of the mortal to language, because of the ability of the mortal to name, does not give any independence or power over language to the individual. This naming only occurs as a response to language by the individual. So, the creation of great poetry is not so much attributed to a mastery of language by the author, but it is rather attributed to the authors listening and responding to language. This relationship, while the mortal is important, is still a master-slave relationship.

It is through accessing language that individuals become authentic, and are for this reason dependent on language. The individual expands and develops language, which makes language dependent upon individuals. This codependency carries with it an intricacy between language and the individual which makes it the case that any malady of party results in a malady of the other. In one direction this is a simple tragedy, in the other it is a more complicated one. If there is a malady of the individual, then language would suffer in that it would not develop or become more authentic itself. For example, if Shakespeare had not learned to write, or if Bach had not learned to compose, then language would have suffered a great deal. If, on the other hand, there is a malady of language, the individual will not be able to access it, and as a result the individual will be unable to develop their authenticity or individuality. Access to language is vital to the authenticity of the individual because, as Heidegger says, "only speech enables man to be the living being he is as man."[37] It is through language that one finds themselves and develops their thoughts, understandings, and dispositions.

[37] Martin Heidegger, "Language," 189.

‘Degradation’ is what we will call the malady of language, and this degradation manifest itself in two distinct ways. Morality, the first of these manifestations, has cleansed language in such a way that there are certain parts of language that are off limits to the individual. We are told, by morality, that we ought not to partake in certain expressions of language. Examples of this are wide in their breadth. It is considered impolite (a lower form of immorality) to discuss politics or money at the dinner table. There are certain constraints on what is appropriate for an academic paper, there is a criterion on which I am to base my clothing choice, and morality has even taught us to feel shame if certain topics arise during our internal discussions.

What is not placed off limits by morality may be placed in reserve by the technological understanding of the world that has been bestowed upon us by modernity. This technological enframenment was discussed in depth in the discussion of *The Question Concerning Technology* a few pages ago. The way in which technology opened humanity to seeing rivers, coal, oil, and entire forests as reserves waiting to be used as sources of energy has concurred our understanding of the world to such an extent that we now see everything in such a way, even language. Language is in reserve, waiting to be plucked from when the time comes.

When Hannah Arendt covered the trial of Adolf Eichmann, she brought to her reader’s attention the idea that Eichmann had little access to his mother tongue. He spoke in clichés, picking phrases that roughly fit into the conversation. The morality of the Nazi regime had turned Eichmann into a being that was unable to authentically participate in language. His inability to contribute to language and develop his own dialogue was one of the side effects Eichmann suffered while under the spell of the totalitarian government’s moral preachings. With a

dogmatic system, such as religion or totalitarianism, morality is able to gain a secure foothold. In a structure that does not allow contributions or redactions (you cannot change the Ten Commandments), one is forced to pick from the language already available. Eichmann did not feel guilt for his involvement in the development of the final solution because the Nazi dogma, which was his only source of language, did not have in reserve the option to think the final solution was a thing for which one should feel guilt.

Why is morality the culprit behind the degradation of language rather than dogma or totalitarianism? Because, morality is the overarching, and legitimizing, structure of things such as dogma and totalitarianism. Dogma and totalitarianism merely carry out the bidding of the system of morals. Christianity, like totalitarian regimes, traces its preaching back to an inherent moral code. It is in the axiom of morality that religions, oppressive governments, and other institutions secure their preachings. Morality is not to be questioned, and it is because of this that it is so effective at convincing one that certain clothes, music, art, literature, sexualities, and dietary choices are wrong in a deep and unalterable way.

Modernity has brought with it technologies that allow the human race to harvest and store the energy of the earth. This ability has become a habit. Rivers, forests, wind, and the sun are understood not as entities of beauty or things in their own right. The earth and its bounty is measured by the amount of energy that can be harvested from it. The world has been put in reserve, to be used as the human race sees fit. This habit of placing our world in reserve expands to beyond the world of materials. We have put language in reserve as well, as a store from which we take what we need. When the individual places the earth in reserve she removes herself from

it. She turns the world into a store of energy rather than a dwelling. This removal also occurs when one places language in reserve. We step outside of language and, like Eichmann, pluck from the store of language when we are in need. In removing oneself from language, the individual loses their ability to dwell within language, and because it is only through language that an individual can live authentically, the removal of oneself from language stunts authenticity.

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